

REMARKSAmendments

In the claims, claims 1, 2, 11, and 13 to 15 have been amended and all now recite that the force applied to the compliant material can be done in a plurality of incremental pre-set positions. These amendments have been made solely to more clearly define and recite the present invention, and have been made in the interest of rapid prosecution and without prejudice to Applicants' right to prosecute claims of similar or different scope to the unamended claims in one or more continuation applications. Furthermore, it is believed that the requested amendments can properly be made at this stage, in that they do not raise new issues (the plurality of incremental pre-set positions being a result of latching ridges 32 and latching teeth 34 as shown in Figures 1 to 4), and place the claims in condition for allowance or in better condition for appeal.

The Rejection Under 35 USC § 102(b)

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1 to 15 under 35 USC § 102(b) as anticipated by Chiotis (U.S. Patent No. 5,934,922), insofar as the rejection is applicable to the amended claims. (Please note that the Office Action Summary indicates that claims 1-14 are rejected. However, there are 15 claims currently pending, and paragraph 2 of the Detailed Action does indicate that the rejected claims are 1-15.)

The present invention is directed to an electrical connector having a housing and cap. The connector is *adjustable* for accommodating variations in size and tolerance of a sealing member, particularly a gel sealing member, compressed within the connector. The adjustment is made via a latching mechanism, including latching ridges and teeth formed in the side walls of the housing and cap. Together, the latching teeth and ridges form a plurality of incremental pre-set positions for adjusting the pressure on the sealing member.

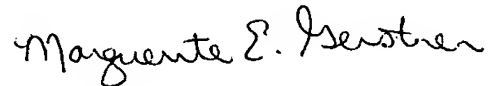
Chiotis discloses an assembly for sealing an end of a hollow member, e.g. a connector, in which a self-supporting sealing member composed of a layer of sealant positioned between two constraining layers is inserted into the open end. The sealing member has at least one perforation in it so that when a wire or other substrate is inserted through the sealing member into the hollow member and a force is then applied to the sealing member, the sealant is compressed and seals around the substrate and in contact with the inner surface of the hollow member. In the embodiment shown in Figures 3 and 4, a connector body 24 having first and second lips 20,22, engages flange 26 on connector 18.

Two positions are possible: a first position in which first lip 20 holds flange 26 so that the sealing member is maintained in a non-compressed state (Figure 3), and a second position in which flange 26 is moved to engage second lip 22 so that the sealing member is maintained in a compressed state (Figure 4; see column 5, lines 47-58). There is no teaching whatsoever, that an adjustable connector, with a number of different possible levels of compression, can be made. Therefore, the connector of Chiotis would not have the advantages of the present invention, i.e. that a single connector can be used to achieve a wide range of pressures so that a proper seal can be achieved even when the thickness of a sealant is not uniform or the number of inserted electrical contacts varies.

Conclusion

It is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance and such action at an early date is earnestly requested. If, however, there are any outstanding issues which can be usefully discussed by telephone, the Examiner is asked to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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